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ABSTRACT

In 1978, the historic Camp David Peace Accords between Egypt and Israel were signed in a ceremony broadcast from the White House. The ceremony may be seen as a member of a rhetorical genre informally called the Presidential Parasocial Broadcast Announcement, but with a new twist. The genre has its roots in the Fireside Chats of Franklin D. Roosevelt, and has continued and developed with the television addresses of Presidents Eisenhower, Johnson, Nixon, and Carter. The Camp David ceremony fits two major, self-evident conventions of the parasocial broadcast announcement in that it was an announcement of events, and it had the president, Jimmy Carter, as its focus. The remaining elements of the genre are drama, image building, and the parasocial relationship created by the broadcast media. The parasocial relationship involves people in what seems to be a face-to-face meeting even when they are not in direct contact, an illusion that stems from the speaking distance created via radio and television. The ceremony certainly had a dramatic element, as it was seen at the time as being the decisive point in the negotiations between Israel and Egypt to end their conflict. With regard to image building, Carter's key role in the agreements served to bolster significantly his tenuous image as an effective leader. The new twist in the genre is the participation of three people, and the appearance of someone other than the President, specifically Menachem Begin, as the best communicator. (HTH)

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The Camp David Ceremony and the Genre of the Presidential Parasocial Broadcast Announcement

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Abstract

On September 17, 1978, the Camp David Peace Accords were signed in a ceremony broadcast from the East Room of the White House. The ceremony was of historical value in that it was the first step of a process which eventually led to the signing of a peace treaty between Israel and Egypt. However, the ceremony was not without rhetorical force; rather it may be seen as a member of a rhetorical genre that may be named the Presidential Parasocial Broadcast Announcement. The genre was made possible with the advent of radio, and has its roots in the Fireside Chats of Franklin Delano Roosevelt. It continued and developed with the television addresses of Presidents Eisenhower, Johnson, Nixon, and Carter. The Camp David Ceremony may be viewed as a continuation of the genre, but with a new twist. This paper analyzes and critiques the Camp David Ceremony in light of the genre and offers suggestions as to how the ceremony contributed to the American public's background awareness vis-a-vis President Carter, Prime Minister Begin, and President Sādāt.

The Camp David Ceremony and the Genre of the Presidential Parasocial Broadcast Announcement

On the evening of September 17, 1978, Norman Lear opened the Thirtieth Emmy Award Ceremony by criticizing ABC and NBC for competing with the ceremony via their respective television premier broadcasts of the series "Battlestar Galactica" and the 1976 version of "King Kong."[1] Perhaps Mr. Lear should have put in a word about Gerald Rafshoon, as within two hours, a Rafshoon staged production had pre-empted all three programs. The production was the White House ceremony held to announce the results of the Camp David Summit that had been held between President Carter, the Egyptian President Anwar al-Sādāt, and the Israeli Prime Minister Menahem Begin.[2] Clearly, the ceremony was of significant historical and dramatic value, which warranted the attention of the American people. But the ceremony was not without rhetorical force; rather it may be seen as a member of a rhetorical genre that may be named the Presidential Parasocial Broadcast Announcement. The genre was made possible with the advent of radio, and has its roots in the Fireside Chats of Franklin Delano Roosevelt. It continued and developed with the television addresses of Presidents Eisenhower, Johnson, Nixon, and Carter. The Camp David Ceremony may be viewed as a continuation of the genre, but with a new twist.[3]

In evaluating the Camp David Ceremony, four areas of analysis are relevant. First, what were the key events which led to the ceremony? Second, what took place at the ceremony? Third, what elements of the ceremony place it within the genre of the Presidential Parasocial Broadcast Announcement? And finally, in light of the genre's conventions, what criticisms may be made concerning the performance of the principal characters in the ceremony?

Turning to the first area of analysis, the overriding concern between Israel and Egypt prior to--and following--the summit was the state of war which had existed between the two nations for the past thirty years. Sādāt had declared an end to the state of war during his November 1977 visit to Israel; but the negotiations to make the peace official via a treaty had not been completed a year later. Rather, both sides had suspended the peace talks with no set future date to resume negotiations.[4]

The peace talks had broken down over two key issues. The first issue dealt with the amount of land, occupied during the 1967 War, which Israel would return to Arab control. The second issue dealt with the fate of the Palestinian Arabs. Egypt had demanded that all occupied land be returned, whereas Israel agreed to return the Muslim holy places in Jerusalem to Arab control; but would not return the rest of Jerusalem, nor abandon its settlements on the Sinai and the West Bank. With regard to the Palestinians, the Egyptian government wanted to set up a Palestinian "entity," while the Israeli government would not accept the creation of such a state.[5]

By the summer of 1978, President Carter began the diplomatic process of inviting Begin and Sādāt to a summit meeting in the United States. The plan was to isolate Carter, Sādāt, and Begin in the Camp David, Maryland Presidential Retreat. The men, with the aid of advisors, would bargain virtually nonstop until a framework for a peace treaty could be reached. Although this plan of action had a distinct aura of masochism to it; the benefits, if successful, would prove beneficial to all three participants.

President Carter's popularity had declined significantly since his inauguration almost a year and a half earlier. Carter had been unable to push important legislation through the Congress, his energy bill the most prominent. Critics had denounced him for his inexperience in national and international politics, inferring that his major qualifications centered in a good set of teeth and a nice smile, but little else. There is no doubt that Carter and his staff believed that a breakthrough in the Middle East peace effort would aid Carter's image both at home and abroad. However, one must not discount Carter's strong fundamentalist religious convictions which could also have influenced his decision to take an active role in bringing peace to a region holy not only to his religion, but to the religions of both Sādāt and Begin. Finally, going back to the administration of President Truman, the United States had always had a strong relationship with the State of Israel and had made numerous attempts in the past to mediate a peace between Israel and its Arab neighbors.[6] Thus Carter

had a precedent to follow that was both strong and had an overwhelming support among the American people.

President Sādāt also had strong reasons to make peace. Perhaps the most outstanding reason centered in the fact that Egypt was and remains in an economic shambles. In essence, the nation had been spending approximately forty percent of its budget on defense, while over eighty percent of its population was living in poverty. The percapita income was three hundred dollars, which was being eaten up by an annual inflation rate of twenty percent.[7] If Sādāt could make peace with Israel, he could funnel less of the nation's budget into defense and more into national development projects. But more importantly, a peace treaty would introduce a degree of stability to Egypt that would allow foreign investors to come in and utilize the large Egyptian labor force. Sādāt had that possibility firmly in mind a few years ago when he abolished the socialism imposed by his predecessor Jamāl 'Abd al-Nāsir[8] and actively sought foreign investment in Egypt. His policy was and is still called the "Infitah" or the "Opening" of the Egyptian economy.[9] But the "Infitah" had not been successful prior to the Camp David Summit; and statements by Sādāt show that he believed only a lasting peace could make the program successful.[10]

With regard to Sādāt's image, he had the apparent support of his fellow Egyptians in his efforts to achieve peace, but had run into difficulties with Arab "Hard-liners." As Sādāt pointed out in his speech to the Israeli Knesset, the conventional rule among Arab leaders is to refer to Israel as

a non-entity. Sādāt had broken this rule dramatically by visiting Israel and giving her de facto recognition by addressing the Knesset and opening official peace negotiations. Sādāt thus needed to come up with a peace treaty acceptable to his fellow Arabs; and to do so, he had to reopen negotiations with Israel.[11] Nevertheless, one must not put this as an overriding concern in Sādāt's strategy. Clearly it would be helpful for him to satisfy his fellow Arabs and thus improve his image among them. But Sādāt is an Egyptian first and an Arab second, so if worse came to worse, there is no doubt that Sādāt was willing to make a separate peace with Israel and begin the more pressing and laborious process of rebuilding Egypt's economy. Within the United States, Sādāt had an excellent image. He had been hailed as a peace maker by the major media; and had the honor of being Time magazine's "Man of the Year."[12]

To be frank, Menahem Begin did not have a favorable image in the United States prior to his participation in the Camp David Talks. Begin had become the Prime Minister of Israel in May 1977, when his Likud party won a plurality in the Knesset. Prior to the election, the government of Israel had been controlled by the Mapai (or Labor) party. But in early 1977, it was discovered that the wife of Prime Minister Yitzak Rabin had bank accounts in the United States which were illegal under Israeli law. Rabin resigned and a national election was held, resulting in the Likud victory. Begin subsequently formed a coalition with a number of smaller political parties and became the new Prime Minister.[13] But

his election was not treated favorably in the United States' press. The Time magazine cover for the week of Begin's election was filled with a portrait of a scowling Begin, captioned with the words: "Israel: Trouble in the Promised Land."[14] Inside, the biographical sketch of Begin was entitled: "Kind . . . Honest . . . Dangerous" and began as follows:

> His first name means "comforter" Menachem Begin (rhymes with Fagin) has been anything but that to his numerous antagonists. To the British in the 1940's, he was Public Enemy No. 1 in Palestine, with a $30,000 price on his head. To the Arabs, he was a ruthless terrorist responsible for the massacre of innocent Palestinian villagers. To Israel's first Premier, David Ben-Gurion, he was a dangerous fascist who threatened to overthrow the newborn nation's fledgling government in 1948.[15]

The reference to Fagin, the villain of Dicken's Oliver Twist, is both inexcusable and hardly conducive to a positive image. The article went on to emphasize Begin's past as the leader of the Irgun Zvai Leumi, a paramilitary organization that had fought to force the British to relinquish their Palestine Mandate.[16]

Newsweek's treatment of Begin was not much better than Time's. The May 30, 1977, Newsweek cover had a photograph of Begin captioned by the phrase: "Israel: Day of the Hawks." The table of contents had another photograph of Begin which was entitled: "The Hawk Apparent." Within the magazine, Muhammad Heikel, the editor of Egypt's number one daily newspaper Al-Ahram, was pictured in an article entitled: "The Mideast: What's Next." Next to Heikel's picture, he was quoted

as saying: "[The] Israel's have opted for an escape from reality."[17]

Begin's image had been helped by his peace overtures in late 1977 and by the welcome he had given to Sādāt when the latter visited Israel in November 1977.[18] But Begin in this encounter as well as in his overall activities, did not exude the informal warmth and humor that had been the hallmark of his two most prominent predecessors, David Ben-Gurion and Golda Meir. Rather Begin's mannerisms and choice of dress had given him a stiff, formal appearance in the media. As Newsweek pointed out: "His Old World courtliness is legendary--he regularly kisses ladies' hands--and in Israel's open-collared society, he is conspicuous for his suit and tie."[19] In fact, the suit and tie combination is somewhat of a trademark for Begin.[20]

During the Camp David Conference, a few photographs were released by the White House. In all of them but one, Begin appeared in a suit, white shirt and tie; whereas Carter was seen usually in a knit shirt, with open collar. Sādāt was either in shirtsleeves or in a safari suit.[21] Time reported that Begin did remove his jacket and tie on occasion; and in fact, there is a photograph of Begin without his usual attire. The picture is of a chess game that Begin played with Zbigniew Brzezinski.[22] Brzezinski was in a striped polo shirt, while Begin was in a white shirt, dress slacks, and a dark button-up cardigan sweater. Thus even in informality, Begin retained somewhat of a formal air about him. This discussion of Begin's dress is significant, as his outward appearance and the media's

emphasis on his past can be seen as the major factors in the somewhat negative image he had in the media prior to and during the Camp David Conference.

Begin had more at stake at Camp David than his image in the media. More importantly, his nation, like Egypt, was suffering severe economic hardship from the state of "no war, no peace." Israel, spent--and still does--a high degree of its budget on defense, approximately thirty percent. This figure may not seem too high in comparison to the percentages of the United States' budgets spent on defense in the past. But the Israeli budget is usually equal to its Gross National Product. Thus Israel's defense expenditures in 1977 equaled almost thirty percent of all the money it obtained from its industry, agriculture, and trade.[23] A peace with Egypt could reduce the need for such large defense expenditures. And hopefully, once Egypt made a treaty, the other Arab states would follow suit, thus reducing even more the amount of money needed for defense.

In summary, one can see that there were significant reasons to motivate both Sādāt and Begin to accept Carter's invitation to Camp David. Both men and their nations needed peace. They had reached a stalemate in their negotiations which had begun after Sādāt's visit to Israel. Consequently, the situation was ripe for a mediator to step in, and Carter filled the requirements with his plan for a summit.

The conference began on the fifth of September and lasted for thirteen days until the seventeenth. Throughout the talks, careful attention was paid toward keeping total

secrecy.[24] Jody Powell served as the official spokesman for all of the three nations involved and he did not reveal very much. The first official report was not made until the talks had been in progress for four days. At that time, Powell stated: "Progress does seem to have been made in some areas. However, substantial differences still remain on other important issues."[25] Following this, Powell gave daily briefings, which were aptly described as "sparse," and caused one reporter to comment: "I'm filing every time he sneezes."[26] Powell did give the press some relatively solid information on Wednesday, September the thirteenth, when he said that the talks were in the "final stages" and only "differences" remained. Newsweek noted this as a "significant change of nuance" as before he had indicated the existence of "substantial differences."[27] I agree that Powell had indicated progress had been made in the talks, but his lack of specificity left the press and the public with very little "hard" evidence with regard to what was actually taking place, other than some form of momentum.

Another hint of progress in the talks, occurred when Carter's media expert, Gerald Rafshoon arrived at Camp David on the same day that Powell made the pseudo-dramatic distinction between "substantial differences" and just plain "differences." Rafshoon's arrival was seen as the beginning of plans to "map out a media and public-relations blitz in celebration of a successful summit."[28] However, Rafshoon could have been called to plan a graceful way of announcing that although some differences were resolved, the summit had not been successful

in drawing up a set of accords. So, in actuality, by the scheduled conclusion of the talks on Sunday, September the seventeenth, very little was known by the public and press. And as a result, there was a noticeable curiosity and heightened sense of expectation on the part of many people, especially the press, to see what had taken place. The assertion can then be made that the press blackout at Camp David not only served to reduce potentially damaging "leaks"; but also guaranteed Carter, Begin, and Sādāt a large audience when they broke the news of the summit's results. This situation, plus an excellent choice of timing for the ceremony, worked to insure that Carter, et. al. would receive maximum media exposure.

Turning to Gerald Rafshoon and his staff, it should be remembered that he probably began the plans for announcing the results of the summit as early as Wednesday, September the thirteenth, if not earlier, when he was still in Washington, D.C. By Friday the fifteenth, it was announced that the talks would end on the upcoming Sunday;[29] but no specific time was given for the official announcement of the results. Information learned sometime after the summit ended, shows that the final agreements were made at 4:30 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time on Sunday afternoon.[30] There would naturally be time needed to type up the relevant information to be released to the press; and the participants would have needed time to compose or to polish up the remarks they would be making at the signing ceremony. It takes about thirty-five minutes to reach the White House from Camp David via helicopter;[31] so with all of

the above considerations, there was little possibility for an afternoon ceremony. However, there was certainly enough time for one in the early evening.

The ceremony did not take place until a rather late hour, 10:30 EDT.[32] Evidently, Rafshoon had taken time zones into consideration; as the 10:30 EDT slot gave the announcement an excellent position for maximum media exposure. As indicated earlier, Sunday, September the seventeenth, was a "big" night for network special programming. "Battlestar Galactica" had begun at 8:00 p.m. EDT, "King Kong" at 9:00 p.m. EDT, and the Emmy's at 8:30 p.m. EDT.[33] Since the Central Time Zone's television programming is simultaneous with the Eastern Time Zone's, the 10:30 p.m. EDT broadcast would have reached the television households of both zones well into the viewing of one of the three major network offerings. Considering that approximately eighty-three percent of the United States' population lives in the Central and Eastern Time Zones, the ceremony was guaranteed a good audience.[34] But the Mountain Time Zone begins prime time viewing at 6:00 p.m., their time, which is 8:00 p.m. eastern time.[35] So the Galactica premier would have begun at the equivalent of 9:00 p.m. EDT, King Kong at 10:00 EDT, and the Emmy's at 9:30 p.m. EDT. Thus, overall, the 10:30 p.m. EDT slot guaranteed the ceremony a showing during the three major media programs of the evening in all states except California, Washington, Oregon, and Nevada which are in the Pacific Time Zone; and Alaska and Hawaii who are five hours behind eastern time. But the ceremony did take place within the first hour of prime time on

the West coast; so in all the timing was excellent.

To back the last contention further, one can look at the Nielsen Ratings for the three major television showings which the ceremony pre-empted. "Battlestar Galactica" received a rating of 27 points, "King Kong" a rating of 19.7 points, and the Emmy's a rating of 18.7 points.[36] Since the estimated length of the ceremony was not given in advance, the viewers in most cases probably left their sets on during the ceremony. This way they would be able to catch the endings of their respective programs. Nothing required the audience to pay attention to the ceremony, but the news blackout could have raised the interest of those who follow national and international events; and they probably watched. These people had to be Kafshoon's target audience, and he appears to have reached them.

With regard to the ceremony itself, it took place in the East Room of the White House before an immediate crowd of approximately one hundred fifty people, which included: "the press, diplomatic corps, congressional leaders, and members of the Egyptian, Israeli and U.S. negotiating teams."[37] The ceremony consisted of an announcement of the summit's results by President Carter, followed by brief statements from President Sādāt and Prime Minister Begin. All three men sat behind a single mahogany-colored desk which had a set of two microphones to the left of each speaker. Carter sat in the middle, with Begin to his left and Sādāt to his right. All three men were dressed in two-piece suits, with white shirts and ties. The seating arrangement for the three men

as well as their clothing, provided both a sense of equality and of togetherness. However, since Carter was in the middle, attention was focused on him. Behind the men stood the flags of their respective nations, which were placed immediately in front of a gold-colored curtain. The overall color scheme of the East Room is gold, with white walls, making it an excellent setting for a ceremony that is both cheerful and serious.[38]

The entire ceremony lasted approximately thirty minutes. President Carter's speech lasted around eight minutes; whereas President Sādāt's speech and Prime Minister Begin's speech lasted approximately three minutes and eleven minutes respectively. The rest of the time was taken to sign the two agreements.[39]

The overall mood of the ceremony was both exuberant and dramatic; the latter was created by the context of the ceremony as well as by the fact that little had been known about the talks prior to the ceremony. The feeling of exuberance came primarily from Carter and Begin. Sādāt's appearance was rather staid and formal, a problem that will be analyzed shortly.

In considering the content of the three participant's speeches, one finds that Carter spoke from a prepared text and his speech served the function of outlining the content of the accords that had been agreed upon during the summit. Carter began his remarks by referring to the fact that at the outset of the talks, all three men had agreed to ask the world to pray for their success. Carter continued by saying:

> Those prayers have been answered, proved beyond any expectations. We're privileged to witness tonight a significant

> achievement in the cause of peace, an achievement no one thought possible a year ago, or even a month ago, an achievement that reflects the courage and wisdom of these two leaders.[40]

This statement was the first hint that a major breakthrough had been made; and thus served as a good means of getting the audience's attention. But it is important to note that although Carter was dealing with an important and serious situation, he was speaking in a plain, conversational style. He was addressing the immediate audience and his viewing audience in the manner appropriate for an interpersonal context. Note that he said "We're privileged to witness . . ." By saying "We're" Carter set up an informality and a sense of togetherness, as would be found in an interpersonal situation. Carter went on to give a detailed explanation of the accords; but the explanation was clear and simple; except for two terms that are a part of diplomatic jargon, i.e., "self-governing authority" and "interim withdrawals."[41]

Toward the end of his remarks, Carter expressed his "admiration for all of those who have taken part in this process" and his "hope that the promise of this moment will be fulfilled."[42] He continued by complimenting all of those involved for continuing to work when "there was a danger that human energy would fail, or patience would be exhausted, or good will would run out . . ." He then implied that such energy and perseverance would be needed for the coming negotiations necessary to complete the peace process.[43]

In effect, Carter's words appeared to be an attempt to moderate the exuberance of the moment. He congratulated everyone

for what they had done, but made sure that everyone realized there was more work to be done. However, Carter's own non-verbal cues, tended to contradict the moderation of his words. He was visibly overjoyed with the results of the summit and this joy was expressed quite graphically by a slight grin that would appear on occasion.

While Carter spoke, Anwar al-Sādāt's face was somewhat expressionless and he appeared to be lost in thought. Harry Kelly of the Chicago Tribune noted that Sādāt's "eyes seemed to be focusing on a section of woodwork on the great door beyond the crystal chandelier . . ."[44] Begin on the other hand was smiling the whole time and focused his eye contact on the immediate audience[45]

Sādāt spoke after Carter, and also utilized a prepared text. But Sādāt's speech was a marked contrast to Carter's. First, Sādāt put on a pair of glasses and paid careful attention to his notes. He spoke slowly and with a definite rhythmic pattern. Sādāt had difficulty in pronouncing several words, such as "challenge" and "emergence."[46] However, the primary difference occurred in the choice of wording. Sādāt's remarks were quite formal and did not fit into the conversational tone established by Carter. For example, Sādāt began by stating:

> Dear President Carter, in this historic moment, I would like to express to you my heartfelt congratulations and appreciation. For long days and nights you devoted your time and energy to the pursuit of peace.
>
> You have been most gracious when you took the gigantic steps of convening this meeting. The challenge . . . the challenge was great, and the risks were high, but so was your determination. You made a commitment to be a full partner in the peace talks.

> I'm happy to say that you have honored your commitment.[47]

Sādāt remained somewhat in the interpersonal context by speaking directly to Carter. But the choice of language was in the grand style. Such comments as "the challenge was great, and the risks were high, but so was your determination," are more appropriate for a speech of praise, than for a series of compliments within an interpersonal context. It is also interesting to note that Sādāt spent the majority of the speech discussing Carter's role in the summit. Sādāt did not mention Begin by name, although he could have been in mind when Sādāt made the following comments: "We have reaffirmed the faith of the Palestinian people . . ." and "Our hosts at Camp David and the State of Maryland were most generous and hospitable."[49]

Menahem Begin's remarks provided a significant contrast to those of Sādāt. Begin did not use notes and was apparently speaking extemporaneously. Begin began by stating:

> The Camp David conference should be renamed. It was the Jimmy Carter conference.
>
> The president undertook an initiative most imaginative in our time and brought President Sadat and myself and our colleagues, friends and advisors together under one roof. In itself it was a great achievement.[50]

These comments set a plain, confident tone for Begin's further remarks, which fit the interpersonal context established by Carter.

Like Sādāt, Begin spent most of his time praising Carter. However, Begin, in a sharp contrast to Sādāt, was visibly happy and far more fluent. Begin also utilized humor to

lighten the tone of his comments. For example:

> And the president [Carter] worked. As far as my historic experience is concerned, I think he worked harder than did our forebears in Egypt building the pyramids.[51]

This particular statement is important, as Begin was in effect stating that they should forget the cruelties of the past and start anew.

Begin then completed his comments about Carter and turned to his fellow Israelis saying, to them in Hebrew, words to the following effect:

> Hear O' Israel. All these mornings Israel has been waiting. Peace is coming. We know this is very good. This is what Israel has been waiting for. Yes, this is what we have been wanting.[52]

This touch was no doubt appreciated by the Hebrew speaking audience in Israel and elsewhere, but it also gave Begin an aura of adroitness that is certainly important in establishing a favorable image in the media.

At this point, the overall background for the ceremony and its content has been explored. The next question, then, is how does the ceremony fit into the genre of the Presidential Parasocial Broadcast Announcement? In answering this question, the first area to examine is the emphasis which the ceremony placed on Carter himself. It is true that the three leaders were in the White House to sign a framework for a peace treaty. But upon a thorough examination of the situation and the speeches that were delivered, one finds that the major emphasis was on Jimmy Carter.

It was Carter who had called the summit and it was Carter who had served as the catalyst to force the two leaders to actually reach an agreement while at Camp David. Both Sādāt and Begin acknowledged these facts and thanked Carter for what he had done. Begin re-emphasized this when he said the Camp David Conference should be renamed the "Jimmy Carter Conference."

It is also important to note that the ceremony was held in the Presidential mansion and it was the President's people who had handled all of the logistics for the event. The fact that Carter was the center of attention was further emphasized in that he was the first to speak. Also, he was the one who sat in the middle and thus received the center of focus during the camera shots which contained all three leaders at once. When it came time to sign the agreements, it was Carter who served as the moderator to tell the audience which agreements were being signed. Clearly Carter was in control of the situation and it reflected favorably on him, as he became the center of attention.

The term "ceremony" has been used frequently within this study and a question which may arise at this point, is: what allows one to consider a "ceremony" an "announcement"? First, the Camp David Ceremony was a ceremony in that two diplomatic documents were signed by Sādāt and Begin; and were witnessed by Carter. But the primary function of the ceremony was to announce the results of the Camp David Summit. Thus the signing of the documents actually became secondary to the overall effect of the event. Consequently, I feel

justified in placing the Camp David Ceremony within the context of an announcement.

So far, I have related how the ceremony in question was basically an announcement and had the President of the United States as its central focus. It therefore fit two major, but self-evident conventions of the Presidential Parasocial Broadcast Announcement. Three other conventions remain, these being an element of drama, an element of image-building, and most importantly, the parasocial relationsnip created by the broadcast media.

First, with regard to the parasocial relationship, Dan Nimmo defines it as a relationship that "involves people in what seems like face-to-face meeting even when they are not in direct contact."[53] This illusion stems from the type of speaking distance which may be created via radio and television. Tony Schwartz points out:

> On TV and radio, most performers are speaking in a personal space relationship to home listeners, even though they are separated by thousands of miles. The effective distance between performer and listener is the sum of the distances from the performer's mouth to the microphone, plus the distance from the TV or radio in the home to a listener's ear.[54]

The broadcast media are, therefore, essential for the creation of the parasocial relationship. Few Americans have or will be able to be in direct personal contact with Carter, Begin, or Sādāt. But the closeness of the cameras to the participants during the Camp David Ceremony did create a pseudo-direct, personal contact.

In considering the total genre, my contention is that it has its origins in the Fireside Chats of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, during a time when radio had finally reached a stage in growth to be considered an actual mass medium. Roosevelt always conducted his fireside chats as if he were sitting in the listener's living room and did so via a light, conversational style.[55] In the following quotation, Waldo Braden and Earnest Brandenberg describe further how Roosevelt created a parasocial relationship with his listeners:

> Roosevelt achieved directness and intimacy by frequent use of the first and second persons. He almost always referred to himself as "I" and to the voters as "you."[56]

With the advent of television, President Eisenhower was the first to make personal announcements to the nation with a visual component. Presidents Johnson and Nixon used this form of address as did Carter in his two "fireside chats"--the first on energy and the second on the Panama Canal Treaty. An important note to make vis-a-vis television is that the visual image can be seen as the primary source of the parasocial relationship, in that the President was always sitting down and appeared as if he was within interpersonal distance. Thus Roosevelt's successors did not have to spend so much time on creating intimacy via language, as the visual image created it for the most part.[57]

The next convention of interest, is the dramatic element of the genre. My contention is that the Presidential Parasocial Broadcast Announcement is usually given either at a time of crisis or some other situation with dramatic impact.

For example, Franklin Roosevelt gave his first fireside chat about the banking crisis in 1932.[58] Acting in what he believed to be a crisis, Eisenhower held a televised discussion on "The Five Fears," these being:

> the fear of "the men in the Kremlin," fear of the hydrogen bomb, fear of "losing our international friends in exposed areas" to Communism, fear of Communist penetration in the U.S.A., and fear of a depression and unemployment.[59]

The Camp David Ceremony certainly had a dramatic element, as it was seen, at the time, as the decisive point in the negotiations between Israel and Egypt to end their conflict.

The last major convention of the genre, is the element of image building. In the cases of the addresses by Roosevelt and Eisenhower already mentioned, it may be asserted that both men wished to appear as decisive leaders during times of crisis. In a similar sense, Nixon's televised announcements during the Watergate crisis may be viewed as attempts to defend his image against attack. In regard to the Camp David Ceremony, Carter's key role in the agreements served to significantly bolster his image as an effective leader.[60]

Finally, in references to specific criticisms that may be made about the participants in the Camp David Ceremony, the overall focus was on Carter, but Begin "stole the show." Begin's extemporaneous delivery and his humorous, conversational content fit the occasion perfectly. This, no doubt, aided his image in the eyes of many Americans.

Carter's performance was adequate for the situation, but if he sought moderation, his nonverbal cues damaged his intent.

Sādāt also had problems with his nonverbal cues, as he appeared disinterested, almost boorish, while listening to Carter give the opening remarks. Also, once Sādāt spoke, his grand style of delivery and content did not fit the parasocial context. I believe the answer to this lies in the fact that Sādāt is used to giving orations to the Egyptian masses in person and over the radio. Television is not that widespread in Egypt.[61] It is, therefore, doubtful that Sādāt has spent much time in televised contexts similar to the Camp David Ceremony. One must also consider the fact that Sādāt was not born and raised in a Western culture as were Begin and Carter. So Sādāt has not had as much experience as the others in relating to Western audiences.

In brief, the Camp David Ceremony was in the genre of the Presidential Parasocial Broadcast Announcement. The ceremony centered on President Carter; but the new twist in the genre occurred in that three people participated, of which a person other than the President of the United States appeared to be the best communicator.

Endnotes:

[1]Chicago Sun-Times, 19 September 1978, p. 68.

[2]The Camp David Ceremony was held at 10:30 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time and was carried by most network affiliates. See: Washington Post, 18 September 1978, p. A14, and the Chicago Tribune, 18 September 1978, sec. 1, p. 18.

[3]My analysis of this genre is based on material provided in Dan Nimmo's Popular Images of Politics: A Taxonomy (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1974) pp. 43-47; and Tony Schwartz, The Responsive Chord (Garden City, New York: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1972), pp. 33-40.

[4]For a complete text of Sādāt's speech and a detailed analysis of the negotiations which followed, see: Keesing's Contemporary Archives, 25 August 1978, pp. 29149-29172.

[5]"Hideaway Summit," Newsweek, 18 September 1978, pp. 22-23.

[6]For a detailed study of this relationship, see: Don Peretz, The Middle East Today: Second Edition (Hinsdale, Illinois: Dryden Press, 1971), pp. 244-298.

[7]Bill Neikirk, "Two Nations Stretched to the Limit," Chicago Tribune Magazine, 8 October 1978, pp. 26-27. Also see Peretz, pp. 236-243.

[8]Nāsir's name is usually spelled "Gamal Abdel Nasser" in the popular press. However, Jamāl 'Abd al-Nāsir is a better transliteration.

[9]For further information on the "Infitah," see Michael C. Hudson, Arab Politics: The Search for Legitimacy, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), pp. 128, 160-161, and 248-249. Also see the following three part series by John Waterbury: "The Opening: Part I: Egypt's Economic New Look," Fieldstaff Reports: Northeast Africa Series, Vol. 20, No. 2 (June 1975); "The Opening: Part II: Luring Foreign Capital," Fieldstaff Reports: Northeast Africa Series, Vol. 20, No. 3 (June 1975); "The Opening: Part III: De-Nasserization?", Fieldstaff Reports: Northeast Africa Series, Vol. 20, No. 4 (June 1975).

[10]See Sādāt as quoted in "Peace is the Key to Everything," Chicago Tribune Magazine, 8 October 1978, pp. 35-36.

[11]See Keesing's Contemporary Archives, 25 August 1978, pp. 29149 and 29161-29172. Also, see Washington Post, 18 September 1978, p. A14.

[12]Time, 2 January 1978, pp. 11-35.

[13]For background information, see: "Israel: Day of the Hawks," Newsweek, 30 May 1977, pp. 32-35. Also, Don Peretz, "The Earthquake--Israel's Ninth Knesset Elections," The Middle East Journal, 31 (Summer 1977): 251-266.

[14]Time 30 May 1977.

[15]Ibid., p. 27.

[16]Ibid., pp. 22-23. For an interesting and relatively objective description of Irgun's activities, see: J. Bowyer Bell, Terror Out of Zion: Irgun Zvai Leumi, LEHI, and the Palestine Underground, 1929-1949, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1977).

[17]"The Mideast: What's Next," Newsweek, 30 May 1977, pp. 38-44. Heikel's comments appear on page 43.

[18]For an example, see: "Begin: Partner for Peace," Time, 2 January 1978, pp. 14-15.

[19]"The Zealot," Newsweek, 30 May 1977, p. 35.

[20]"A Gigantic Peace Effort," Time, 25 September 1978, p. 9.

[21]For examples of these photographs, see: "Hideaway Summit," Newsweek, 18 September 1978, pp. 22, 23, and 24; and "Down from the Summit," Newsweek, 25 September 1978, pp. 26, 27, and 29.

[22]"A Gigantic Peace Effort," p. 9.

[23]Neikirk, p. 26.

[24]Washington Post, 18 September 1978, pp. A1 and A14.

[25]"Hideaway Summit," p. 22.

[26]"The Blackout of '78," Newsweek, 18 September 1978, p. 25.

[27]"Down from the Summit," p. 29. The emphasis on "substantial" is mine.

[28]Ibid.

[29]"Ordeal in the Mountains," Time, pp. 12-13. This piece gives a complete chronology of the events during the summit.

[30]Ibid., p. 13.

[31]"Hideaway Summit," p. 23.

[32]Washington Post, 18 September 1978, p. A14.

[33]Chicago Tribune T.V. Week, 17 September 1978, p. 14.

[34]This figure is based on material found in: Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1970: Part I (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1975), pp. 5 and 22. Also: Information Please Almanac: Atlas & Yearbook: 1978: 32nd Edition (New York: The Viking Press, 1977), p. 750.

[35]Don R. Pember, Mass Media in America: Second Edition (Chicago: Science Research Associates, Inc., 1977), p. 207.

[36]Chicago Sun-Times, 19 September 1978, p. 68.

[37]Washington Post, 18 September 1978, p. A14.

[38]For a photograph of the three participants, see the Chicago Tribune Magazine, 8 October 1978, p. 20.

[39]This information was derived from an audiotape of the ceremony provided by National Public Radio.

[40]Washington Post, 18 September 1978, p. A15.

[41]Ibid.

[42]Ibid.

[43]Ibid.

[44]Harry Kelly, "In a Gesture of Unity 2 Old Foes Embrace," Chicago Tribune, 18 September 1978, sec. 1, p. 18.

[45]Ibid.

[46]National Public Radio audiotape.

[47]Washington Post, 18 September 1978, p. A15.

[48]Ibid.

[49]Ibid.

[50]Ibid.

[51]Ibid.

[52]This translation was made from the National Public Radio audiotape. The translator was Mr. Perry Rein of Winnetka, Illinois.

[53]Nimmo, p. 44.

[54]Schwartz, p. 34.

[55]This contention is based on Nimmo, p. 45, and Waldo Braden and Earnest Brandenburg, "Roosevelt's Fireside Chat," Speech Monographs, 22 (November, 1955): 290-302.

[56]Braden and Brandenburg, p. 301.

[57]This analysis is based on the concepts provided by Nimmo, pp. 43-47 and Schwartz, pp. 34-40.

[58]For a complete text of this speech, see: Edward H. Kavinoky and Julian Park, eds. My Friends--Twenty-one History Making Speeches by Franklin Delano Roosevelt (Buffalo, New York: Foster & Stewart Publishing Corp., 1945), pp. 6-9.

[59]This quotation is a description of the speech as provided by Keesing's Contemporary Archives, April 17-24, 1954, p. 13521. Keesing's has a full text of the speech on pp. 13521-13522.

[60]For evidence of the rise in Carter's popularity, see: "Carter's Swift Revival," Time, 2 October 1978, pp. 8-11; and "Can the Magic Last?", Newsweek, 2 October 1978, pp. 22-23; in the same issue, see: "Born Again!", pp. 24-27.

[61]The basic problem is that most Egyptians cannot afford television sets. However, transister radios are quite inexpensive and they are very widespread in the Middle East. See Hudson, p. 128.